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EDITORIALS
- *On the Eve*
- *Robert Ley's Testament*
- *Economic Peace-Making*

"FROM THEOCRACY TO DEMOCRACY"— A CRITIQUE
By Ruth Rackman

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK
By Sholem Israel

BOOK NOTES *By Theodore N. Lewis*

THE THIRD ANNUAL RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONFERENCE

REALITIES AND VALUES *CORRESPONDENCE*

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the Reconstructionist

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EDITORIALS

ON THE EVE

IN the tangled web of reports, rumors and propaganda that continues to grow around the Palestine situation, the Ibn Saud-Roosevelt correspondence may have already disappeared from public notice. Yet there is one commentary, among the many which have been offered. that cannot be ignored. It is the testimony of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt recently given in her newspaper column "My Day." We quote: "I had heard my husband on a number of occasions after his return from Yalta give an account of the visit paid him by King Ibn Saud. My husband stated that he felt his conversation with the Arab King had been a failure, since the King had told him that, as long as lived, he did not wish any change. An influx into Palestine of Jewish people from the big cities of the world — like London, Paris, Berlin, New York—would meet resistance because it would tend to change the way of life of the whole land."

One conclusion is clearly implied here. Roosevelt, supremely confident of his own powers of persuasion, met with Ibn Saud for the purpose of winning him over to what the President deemed a reasonable and just attitude. But reasonableness and justice, even when buttressed by Rooseveltian charm, made no particular appeal to the Arab monarch. We suggest that this may have been in the President's mind when, in the course of his report on the Yalta Conference, he asserted that he had learned more about the Palestine situation in five minutes of personal discussion with Ibn Saud than he could have learned in Washington in many months.

In any case, the realities in the situation dictate the view that the ultimate decision regarding Palestine will in no wise be directly influenced by this correspondence. The target of its publication was public opinion. The Zionist answer, in the form of a memorandum by the American Zionist Emergency Council to our Secretary of State, was extremely effective. Its authors are to be commended for refusing to go on the defensive and for exposing the unpleasant fact that, while the overwhelming majority of the American people have, through their elected representatives, endorsed Zionist aspirations, the State Department has pursued its own policy in regard to Palestine, totally oblivious of such sentiment.

The propaganda phase of the Zionist struggle, however, is rapidly drawing to a close. (American Council for Judaism and Azzam Bey of the Arab League, please note.) The battle line of events has moved forward and left the pam-

phleteers far in the rear. While Mr. Attlee has been dawdling and various quarters have proposed a commission (another form of official dawdling), sabotage and old fashioned pogroms have broken out; sabotage in Palestine, pogroms and looting in Egypt.

We recognize the anti-British acts of sabotage for what they are — deeds of desperation. Their ethical justification is as dubious as their ultimate effectiveness, but the short-run logic behind them is flawless. If — so argue certain elements in the Yishuv — the British are intimidated into a refusal to redeem their solemn pledges by threats of Arab violence, why should not Jewish violence coerce them into the fulfillment of those pledges? Good or bad logic, it is the desperate heart that impels these deeds; the heart of the Yishuv that longs to welcome the remnant of Israel and save it from the languishing doom of life in concentration camps.

Coming almost simultaneously, the world of public opinion cannot help but contrast Jewish sabotage in Palestine with Arab Nazi-style pogroms in Cairo. While Arab propagandists repeat the old lie about "protecting the Holy places against the Jews," Arab mobs in Cairo wreck a synagogue and desecrate Scrolls of the Torah. What and who inspired these pogroms? The original leadership was undoubtedly anti-Zionist. T. E. Lawrence in his "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" long ago characterized Arab mobs. Arabs, writes the great Arabophile, will follow an idea to the ends of the earth, but, if they hear of loot, they will leave off following the idea and go after the loot. The idea (anti-Zionism) may have been in the minds of the leaders, the Arab gangs were interested in the loot and turned Balfour Day into an occasion for plundering whatever could be plundered from Jews and non-Jews alike. Such is the political maturity of the Arab masses.

Continued delay in reaching a decision can only serve to increase the tension in the Near East. Mr. Attlee's forthcoming meeting with President Truman should result in a joint Anglo-American pronouncement on the Palestine situation. Apparently our government is prepared to undertake some responsibility in relation to the future of Palestine. If it is to reflect popular American sentiment, it must of necessity reckon in an affirmative way with Zionist hopes. We are on the eve. May the words of the ancient prophet be fulfilled, "At evening time, there shall be light."

ROBERT LEY'S TESTAMENT

BEFORE committing suicide in his cell in Nuremberg, Robert Ley, leader of the Nazi Labor Front, and arch-anti-Semite, wrote a *tsava-ah*, a testament, in which he bade Germany repent of her one great sin, anti-Semitism. He was "possessed with this idea," having received the "inspiration and revelation" of God. Ley insists, in his "political testament," that hatred of the Jews has distorted the outlook of the Germans; "and we made grave errors." If Germany is to be strong again, she must reorient herself toward the Jews, and effect a reconciliation. This reconciliation is vital to her future; it "has priority over any economic or cultural reconstruction." "Who will help you rebuild, my German people? . . . The prerequisite is and remains the solution to the Jewish problem in Germany."

The elimination of anti-Semitism is, however, according to Ley, not merely a matter of life or death for the German people. The fate of the entire world is at stake. "Germany has to reconcile herself with Jewry and vice versa, for the sake

of world peace and of world welfare. . . . If humanity is not able to control again the stirred-up emotions, she will perish through them." "Should Germany solve the Jewish problem, and grow healthy through it, the whole world would benefit from it."

At first blush, Jews are likely to be highly pleased with this last-minute *teshuvah* of the wicked Ley. They will rejoice that an anti-Semite has seen the evil of his ways; and they will be gratified that such an (erstwhile) important man should publicly acknowledge the social implications and dangers of anti-Semitism. It is, therefore, important to check whatever celebrations are planned with a bit of closer analysis.

A careful reading of Ley's statement reveals that he did not understand, to his dying hour, what was wrong with Nazism. As Attorney General Tom C. Clark has pointed out, "What Ley had not yet learned and what the surviving Germans must learn is that anti-Semitism was not a separate philosophy from Nazism." The hatred of the Jews was an integral part of an entire world outlook, which included conquest, cruelty and domination. "Unless the civilized world stamps out anti-Semitism and the dark ambitions, the predatory instincts, the mob hysteria, the social injustices that breed the craving for military aggression — all of which go with race and religious hatreds — unless the world we live in today refuses to tolerate these evils, then for those who want peace there can be no peace and for those who want security there can be none." To read Ley, one would get the impression that the whole Nazi program was a fine one, and, indeed, would have succeeded, *except for the tactical error* of destroying the Jews. The next time, implies Ley, try again without the anti-Semitism.

There is, however, another fallacy at the base of Ley's document which, in some respects, is even more disturbing, because he shares it with so many otherwise good people. This fallacy lies in conceiving of the Jews as a supra-normal people. This means that Ley and others regard the Jews as somehow magical in character, holy in the old sense in which the Ark of the Covenant was holy: if you touched it at the wrong time, the contact might prove fatal. This conception of the Jews is deeply involved with the traditional conception of them as the chosen people, as somehow being in a unique relationship to the Deity, as occupying the center of the world's stage and hence determining the course of world history. Sometimes this supra-normal role is interpreted benevolently, and the Jews are supposed to be treated with kid gloves — for the sake of world peace and security; but far more often it is interpreted malevolently, and the Jews are supposed to be wiped out—for the sake of world peace and security. In any case, the Jews are not to be treated like ordinary human beings.

Ley's repudiation of anti-Semitism is, therefore, still no occasion for rejoicing. It is not based upon the assumption that Jews, like all human beings, are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And until those rights are recognized as the rights of normal beings, the position of the Jews will remain precarious. The Jews should desire neither the sweetness, nor the sting, of special status. They should want to be — at least with regard to human rights — "like the other nations."

ECONOMIC PEACE-MAKING

THE period of conversion from a war to a peace economy is full of moral danger to the nation. The relaxation of war-time controls

is bound to be seized upon by the greedy and powerful as an opportunity to exploit their power to the full and enrich themselves at the expense of the public. Just as international alliances tend to break down after the defeat of the common enemy and to make way for international bickering, so, within each nation, the war-time alliance between economic classes tends to break down and economic warfare to ensue. Moreover, wherever there is bitter economic conflict, demagogues find it to their interest to foment interreligious and interracial conflict that further bedevils the effort to resume a normal peace-time economy.

We cannot help, therefore, viewing with alarm the labor-baiting alliance of the bloc of Democratic Congressmen from the poll tax states with Republican representatives of some of the big business interests. That coalition is playing the dangerous game of attempting to sabotage the necessary social and economic legislation which is designed to shorten the transition from a war to a peace economy. It has obstructed the passage of the Unemployment Compensation Bill, of the Full Employment Bill, of the continued federal operation of the United States Employment Service and of the adoption of a permanent Fair Emploment Practice measure. By these tactics, selfish interests hope to preserve a cheap labor market, to keep labor divided and to exploit the temporary scarcity of consumers' goods by inflating prices and depressing wage standards.

Fortunately for the nation, we have a President who is alert to the dangers of the situation. On October 30th, he addressed a forthright message to the people on the subject of the rights and needs of labor and the danger to the country of ignoring them. He laid down the following three objectives for our national economic policy: (1) "to assist in the maximum production of civilian goods," (2) "to remove government controls and restore collective bargaining and free markets," and (3) "to avoid both inflation and deflation."

Realizing to what extent the press of the nation had misrepresented the situation of labor, the President called attention to the millions of former war-workers already unemployed, to the decrease in the worker's "take home" pay resulting from the reduction of working hours, a decrease amounting to as much as one-fourth of his wages, and to other disadvantages to which labor has been exposed in recent months. He also stressed the consideration shown employers in tax reduction and other legislation designed to insure a reasonable profit on investment and to lessen the risks of reconversion. While recognizing the need of some sacrifice on the part of labor during the transition period, he insisted on the necessity for increasing wages above present standards and on the possibility of doing so without raising prices. To effect this he depended on the passage of the legislation already referred to and on the orderly process of collective bargaining. He did not hesitate to risk Congressional resentment by pointing his finger directly at the Congressional committees that were obstructing some of the necessary social and economic legislation, specifying by name the Ways and Means Committee of the House and its Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments.

The President is, moreover, seeking to effect an economy of plenty that avoids inflation and deflation by bringing labor and management together in conference. All sensible people realize that there can be no prosperity for the businessman and the farmer unless labor can purchase the products of industry and agriculture, and that labor can find no employment if business or industry is ruined. Economic

peace is a prerequisite of economic prosperity, but, like all peace, it can be secure only if it is based on justice, if the needs of all concerned are considered. That is the significance of the present labor-management conference. It is as truly part of the process of peace-making as is any international conference that deals with the political problems facing the post-war world. In the process of economic peace-making it must be the government's function to see that, in the course of collective bargaining among the various economic interests, the welfare of the nation as a whole is not made subservient to that of any single group. It must see that issues are determined on principles of equity and not on economic "power politics."

That end will be greatly facilitated if Congress passes the economic legislation recommended by the President. Our readers should let their Congressmen hear from them on those issues, particularly if any Congressman from their district is a member of one of the obstructing Congressional committees designated in the President's address.

REALITIES AND VALUES

THE BRITISH HAVE A REPUTATION for fair play, but, when one observes their behavior in Palestine, one suspects that it is all a conventional lie. A British military court recently condemned a Jew, Itzak Zigelbaum, to seven years' imprisonment for the possession of 200 detonators. At the trial, he was denied the right to engage counsel and prepare a defense. He then refused to testify in his own defense, declaring that "the murderer of millions, Joseph Kramer, the 'Beast of Belsen,' was given an opportunity to prepare a defense, and the British authorities even invited Major Winwood (the man who described the Oswiecim victims as "dregs of the ghetto") to defend him, but a Jew in his own land is refused that right."

With such things going on, no wonder the Palestine authorities do not like inquiring American newspaper correspondents. They recently exiled one of them, Constantine Poulos, of the Overseas News Agency. Our Government has been urged to find out why.

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ONE FREQUENTLY HEARS COMplaints of the number of small and competing congregations, each leading a precarious existence, that are to be found in a community which could be served better by one or two larger and more thriving congregations. But here is a new complaint. An editorial in the Indianapolis *Jewish Post* comments on a congregation's having recently welcomed 180 new members at one time, a number probably in excess of the average membership of most synagogues. The editorial contends that "when a congregation grows to over 1,000 members (and there are some with 1,600 members), then it must be evident that something is wrong when a new congregation does not appear in that same community." But the very prestige which goes with size tends to inhibit the development of other smaller synagogues. There must be some limit to mass production in religion. What is the optimum size of a congregation? We do not recall even hearing that important question ever discussed in the proceedings of any of our congregational unions or in the Jewish press.

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THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CRITIcism of Jim-Crowism in Washington. Only recently we took occasion ourselves to rebuke the D.A.R. for denying the use of Constitution Hall in Washington to the Negro concert pianist, Hazel Scott. But

here is news from Washington of a different sort. It was made by the United Council of Church Women. Several of the delegates, notably Mrs. Harper Sibley of Rochester, N. Y., president of the Council, lived at the homes or clubs of colored members of the Council while sessions were being held. We do not know what the Daughters of the American Revolution thought of this breach of "established custom," or rather we do, but, according to the Religious News Service, the action of the Council members won widespread approval and was favorably commented on in Congress. It is heartening to see a healthy religious faith triumph over a putrid "established custom."

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DR. B. A. LIU, DIRECTOR OF the Speakers' Bureau of the Chinese News Service declares that a disregard of the principle of racial equality "has led to wars in the past and may lead to wars in the future." He pointed out that following World War I, Japan's request that a recommendation for racial equality be included in the peace terms was refused. This may have had some bearing on the attack on Pearl Harbor. Discrimination breeds frustration and bitterness, these lead inevitably to a disregard for the rights of others. Given the aggravated circumstances of social unrest, violence and war are likely to result. We have had evidence of the indifference or active treachery of colonial peoples to the cause of the United Nations in this war. It is as though they saw no advantage in exchanging one master for another. Now the British, French and Dutch empires are experiencing the aftermath of a policy of racial inequality, in the bitter struggle of the Indonesian peoples for their independence. Dr. Lieu's words can be applied to the United States also. The Bilbos, Rankins, and sections of the D.A.R. should take notice.

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A CRISIS HAS ARISEN IN THE affairs of the Cincinnati Jewish Community Council. Its constitution gave the Council the right to speak for the Jews of Cincinnati in all matters of general Jewish interest. This right has been withdrawn by constitutional amendment, so that wherever there is a difference of opinion, the Council is inhibited from speaking as the representative of Cincinnati Jewry. The controversy which brought about this amendment is ideological. The issue is democracy in Jewish life.

Here we have the situation of the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Conference all over again. Has the minority the right to throttle the expression of majority opinion? The issue is a crucial one. To be sure, minority rights must be protected. The minority must have the right to express itself within the organization and to work ceaselessly to try to win over the majority to its own point of view. Moreover, the majority may not require a minority group to take action against its own principles. But where an issue affecting the community as a whole must be determined, the principle of majority rule applies and no minority may inhibit the registering and publicizing of the decision.

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONference, in a letter to Secretary of State Byrnes, suggests that the constitution of the Educational and Cultural Organization of the United Nations include in its purposes the development of "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, lan-

(*Coninued on Page* 24)

"From Theocracy to Democracy"–A Critique

By RUTH RACKMAN*

IN an article entitled "From Theocracy to Democracy" (THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, Vol. X, No. 12), Rabbi Eugene Kohn makes his contribution to the baffling question of authority in Judaism. He urges the modern Jewish community to discard its theocratic character altogether and "commit itself finally and definitely to democracy."

Is Democracy Government by Consent?

In favor of Rabbi Kohn's article one must say that he is careful to define his terms. One is thus spared the trouble of trying to ascertain what he means when he uses much abused words. But is his definition of "democracy" descriptive of democratic governments, and if it is not, would a correct definition support his thesis?

"By democracy we mean a government which derives its authority explicitly from the consent of the governed. Its authority is a delegated one, and it acts merely as the agent of the people in the exercise of its delegated powers."

Ably and correctly, Rabbi Kohn uses the term "democracy" as applicable to government. It is misleading to use the term in any other sense. A despot who condescends to walk upon the boulevards of his capital city and caress the cheeks of commoners' children is not a sovereign who should be called democratic. Democracy is not a personal demeanor or behavior pattern, or way of life. It is a form of government. But does it derive its "authority explicitly from the consent of the governed"? Realistically speaking, the authority is almost never explicit. In what manner have 130,000,000 Americans living today ratified the Constitution or explicitly reposed authority in the President of the United States? At best twenty per cent voted for Roosevelt. But even forgetting the absence of explicit authority, does the authority derive from the consent of the governed? In one sense, yes. Since the governed do not overthrow the government, we imply consent. But that consent is, in fact, mythical—a legal fiction which may or may not serve a useful purpose in political parlance. How many Americans even understand, not to mention consent to, the Interstate Commerce Commission Act, or the Tennessee Valley Authority Act, or the Federal Revenue Act, or countless other bills that comprise the legislation they themselves are supposed to have enacted?

But Rabbi Kohn amplifies his definition. The people delegate authority to the government and the government acts as the people's agent. But how is this agency created? Always by a minority of the people, as any political observer will verify. In any democracy, even a perfect one, only a minority of the individuals involved actually vote for the winning candidates. And the majority, by remaining law-abiding and non-revolutionary, consent to the agency by implication.

Rabbi Kohn, however, completely ignores the agency's limitations. It is not a blanket power of attorney. Rabbi Kohn undoubtedly would resist any attempt by government — whose authority is delegated — to interfere in the slightest degree with certain personal freedoms. He would not want governments to legislate metaphysical systems, standards of art,

* I want to express my gratitude to Chaplain Sidney Greenberg, who, while not responsible for any of the views expressed in this reply, did help immeasurably to clarify my understanding and treatment of the problem.
—*R. Rackman*

or personal preferences in diet. As a matter of fact, every precaution is taken in democracies to circumscribe the delegated authority and keep it within bounds by an elaborate court system empowered to apply constitutional law.

Democracy Inapplicable to Religious Community

Democracy, thus understood, would appear on its surface to be utterly inapplicable to a religious community. First, a religious community is not a state; and while it may have organization, it is not a government. Second, the authority of a religious community is based solely on the suasion of its thinkers and leaders. The adherents are not governed; they are believers. The thinkers and leaders are delegated no powers which involve the coercion of their principals to the profession of any creed, or the fulfillment of any ritual. And even in a democracy, government must keep hands off such matters as creed, forms of worship, metaphysics and philosophies of ethics.

Furthermore, as has already been indicated, the idea of a majority "consenting to" government is a myth. Only a minority ever puts a government in power. We use the myth of the consent of the governed, however, to account for that attitude—necessary in a democratic state—which prompts all minorities to accept, as their own, the will of the majority who voted. Without this attitude there would be perpetual anarchy. In a religious community, there is no need for the myth. Those who disagree may withdraw. Rabbi Kohn, himself, would encourage a brilliant philosopher, whose insight the general populace could not appreciate, to refuse to accept a creed approved by the majority.

And here lies the difficulty with Rabbi Kohn's thesis. He is proposing a substitute for theocracy. Yet, in a theocracy you do have a religious authority. But what Rabbi Kohn proposes will involve no religious authority at all. He is proposing rather a form of federation for Jewish groups, some of which believe in the existence of religious authority and some of which do not believe in it. He, therefore, is not dealing with the same problem of which Professor Gordis treats. It would have been fairer for him to state that he has no contribution to make to that problem.

If, however, he would vest the democratically organized Jewish community with some religious authority, what would we find?

"Non-conformists and unbelievers must not be excluded from" the Jewish community "as long as they wish to maintain their connection with it." If Judaism is what Rabbi Kohn calls it, "an evolving religious civilization," and the Jewish community has the high privilege and moral obligation of preserving it, what madness would prompt one interested in the cause to abide by decisions made by those disinterested? The most orthodox Jew maintains that by Jewish law the heretic is still a Jew—but by what semblance of right can the unbeliever hope to be one of the authorities delegated with the preservation of that which he does not cherish?

Rabbi Kohn would give individual Jews the right to elect to withdraw from the Jewish community. Their legal right to do so, no one will challenge. Their moral obligation to the world at large, however, constitutes another problem, and it may be that they have a moral obligation to remain Jews. And no democratic government will undertake to dictate how one should regard the avoidance of what appears to be a moral obligation.

Should the community's constitutional or federative assembly have the power

to deal with ritual observances? Rabbi Kohn, himself, says no. We do not give that power to legislatures in a democracy. Societies of artists should not legislate standards of art. Nor do societies of philosophers legislate metaphysical systems for their memberships. To make matters of faith and ritual the responsibility of a legislature would defeat one of the primary aims of democratic government. By what token, therefore, should a Jew accept any decisions pertaining to religion which are "made by the authorities constituted by the people through their elected representatives," when these decisions may have been made by representatives of overwhelmingly lukewarm Jews and are matters of conscience? And if the laws of the Shulhan Arukh are only folkways, as so many Reconstructionists maintain, whoever heard of legislating folkways or prohibiting them unless their observance was socially harmful?

"Problems of social relations within the Jewish community which affect all Jews alike would come legitimately within the scope of Jewish law. . . . The regulation of marriage and divorce—in conformity with the laws of the country but also with the standards of ethical behavior which the Jewish community may wish to impose on its adherents—would naturally be subject to procedures determined by Jewish communal authority."

If Rabbi Kohn refers to the property rights of marriage, then the law of the state is applicable — not the law of the community. But if he is referring to that aspect of the marriage relation which involves matters of religion in addition to legality, a democratic assembly should have no right to legislate for its constituents what would make for sanctity. Rabbi Kohn may find the laws of the Shulhan Arukh oppressive; another may find that they constitute a pattern making for holiness. But no one will want to yield his convictions to a majority vote. A true democrat must resent the suggestion.

Democracy Irrelevant to Jewish Educational Procedure

What Rabbi Kohn writes about Jewish education is irrelevant to his thesis. The improvement of our teaching techniques is a real desideratum. Rabbi Kohn suggests that in our teaching there should be less reliance on authorities. Some modern educators may take issue with him and contend that there is too little authoritarianism in our public school system and our religious schools would do well to make up for the deficiency. At any event, the suggestion is irrelevant to the thesis that the Jewish community become a "democracy." The Jewish community, organized as a democracy, will have no more right to control religious education than the democratic state has. Some Jews may resent the teaching of Zionism; others may resent the failure to emphasize the importance of phylacteries.

Democracy Irrelevant to Cultural Zionism

With regard to a Jewish state in Palestine, Rabbi Kohn ably advocates a democracy. But what can the Zionist movement do "to establish a democratic Jewish life in the Diaspora within the frame of a voluntarist federated Jewish community"? Insofar as Zionism is a political movement envisaging the establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, it can agitate for a particular type of state. But insofar as it is a cultural movement, its own "democratic" structure will not give it any legislative powers regarding the relative superiority of one type of Jewish music over another, or the manner in which religion should be taught on Mount Scopus or Merkaz Harav.

Democracy Inapplicable to Theology

The utter abuse of his own definition of democracy Rabbi Kohn manifests

when he closes his essay with a chapter on "Democratizing Our Theology."

Theology cannot be made democratic any more than music or metaphysics can be made democratic. God pity us if the will of the majority in music determines the type of program we shall all listen to. But Rabbi Kohn now means something else when he talks of democracy. He wants men to share in God's sovereignty, and here too sovereignty becomes a term of liturgy instead of political science. But who, even in a theocracy, feels that he must deny man's share in God's creative power? Rabbi Kohn's proposal adds only that "Whatever frustrates men in their quest for salvation, even if it is enjoined by a code once conceived as divine and immutable, must be abolished." What "men" does he refer to, however? If every man is to be his own judge, no religious authority has been constituted. If the majority of men shall decide, then is the frustration any the less serious because the many have caused it instead of the few?

It thus appears that Rabbi Kohn has made no contribution whatever to the question of religious authority in Judaism. A political idea cannot help us in religion when that idea itself precludes any interference whatever in matters of conscience.

Need Judaism Abandon Theocracy?

Rabbi Kohn, however, seeks not only to innovate. He has come to destroy. He urges the Jewish community to abandon "theocracy." And here, too, he carefully explains what he means when he uses a much abused word.

". . . we mean by theocracy a government based on the assumption that the law by which it rules has been supernaturally revealed and is immutable, and that the persons through whom authority is exercised are entitled to unquestioned obedience so long as they exercise their authority within the limits that divine law sets for them."

One can harly argue with a definition if it is not meant to be descriptive of facts. Rabbi Kohn, however, proceeds to say that from the fifth century B.C.E. until the Emancipation, the Jewish community was a theocracy — presumably a theocracy as he defines it. But was it that? Was the law of the Jewish community immutable? Even an amateur in Jewish law knows of the abundance of Rabbinic legislation. And does immutability make a government theocratic? If so, then every democratic state is a theocracy for even in a democracy certain laws are immutable. The so-called natural rights inhere in man and can never be denied — even ultilitarians concede. In a democracy some rights are guaranteed the citizens in *perpetuum,* even over the objection of the majority.

Thus in theocracies and democracies many laws are changed while some remain immutable. Furthermore, it might be said that a divine law underlies both —for divine law is law deriving its validity from a source higher than man's will. And even democracies assume such a law when they place beyond the will of the majority any impairment of certain rights.

Nor can it be said that the Jewish community was a theocracy from the fifth century B.C.E. until the Emancipation — no matter how we define "theocracy." The Jewish community was organized in many different ways. Sometimes the priests were vested with civil and religious authority. Sometimes the state designated a layman to be responsible for the collection of taxes and the maintenance of order. With the coming of the Emancipation and the emergence of the democratic system, membership in the Jewish community and participation in its religious civilization became voluntary — this at least was hoped for. And

in a voluntary community, you have no authority except such as is voluntarily accepted by the individual.

Furthermore, Rabbi Kohn does not indicate the inadequacy of theocratic organization for those who believe that there should be some authority in a religious community that speaks on religious matters. He is committing a fallacy very similar to the one called *ad hominem*. By calling the former authority in Israel "theocratic" he hopes to conjure up all kinds of resentment on the part of intelligent Jews in a democracy and make them fearful of the continuance of the old system. But on matters of religion, only the voice of the experts—the voice of the saints and the sages—is of any consequence. The voice of the people is hardly the voice of God to discriminating thinkers. And whether you call the authority of experts a theocratic authority or the authority of philosopher-kings or the authority of a Beth-Din does not matter. In the long run, those who oppose the authority can withdraw and constitute their own group. And if the majority dissent from the authority and withdraw from the religious community, the authority has lost many of its adherents but freedom of conscience has been preserved. However, the majority cannot affect the loyalty of that minority which still believes that the authority acted in a manner that is consonant with its religious preferences.

What Is Jewish Law?

A third term which Rabbi Kohn uses, without definition, is "Jewish Law." It is the law whose author, in a theocracy, "is conceived to be God." It is of this law that "the living Jewish community . . . should retain whate it wants to retain, . . . discard what it wants to discard, and . . . enact what it wants to enact."

But what is this "Law"? Apparently, it does not refer to rituals, for even in Rabbi Kohn's sketch, "the development of Jewish ritual would have to be left to individuals and to voluntary organizations of like-minded persons." It cannot refer to economic legislation for Jewish law vested the Beth-Din with complete autonomy in such matters without regard to Revelation. We must never overlook the famous maxim *"Hefker Bet Din Hefker."* ("The court is empowered to abrogate property rights.") Rabbi Kohn must, therefore, refer to some frontier of Jewish law which involves neither rituals nor commerce and industry. I know of no such frontier. And if it exists, then certainly its scope cannot be so great that Rabbi Kohn's democratic scheme for its authority will avail very much. And if Rabbi Kohn wants this authority for economic legislation, does he not realize that such laws for the Jewish community in the Diaspora are matters for the state to decide and that only in the rare case of a Din-Torah will they have any significance?

The Real Problem One of Scholarship

It seems to me that the real problem facing Jews that want to preserve the Jewish tradition, and I refer to Orthodox and Conservative Jews alike, is not how we shall select men who will constitute the religious authority nor how we shall achieve the will of the people—problems in political science. The problem is rather one of historical and legal scholarship for the guidance of those who are our leaders and thinkers. Traditions develop; they are not legislated. But their development is a process that can be studied—that which tradition has deemed unalterable is reinterpreted and that which tradition has deemed modifiable is adjusted to the needs of each succeeding generation. Very little was immutable, but some generations were *mahmirim,* and some were *mekilim;* some

sought to make the law more rigorous, while some sought to make it less rigorous. To assume that nothing in the tradition is immutable means that nothing is authentic except the spirit; and for purely pragmatic reason, if for none other, this doctrine should be discarded as endangering the survival of the Jewish community. Therefore, it is not the creation of a religious authority that is needed; it is rather the ascertaining of what is authentic in the tradition. And the way the tradition has been observed by catholic Israel is one way of trying to discover what is authentic and what is not authentic. It is not the only criterion nor the final one, but it can be helpful.

It is this problem that should receive more attention from Orthodox and Conservative rabbis alike.

The Development of My Religious Outlook*

By SHOLEM ISRAEL

Traditional Influence in Childhood

BORN in 1869 at Lida, near Wilno, in Russian Lithuania of parents who, like the rest of the Jewish community (a few hundred families) were very orthodox, I enjoyed a *heder* education, which was limited to the study of the Bible up to the age of ten, and of the Talmud up to the age of fifteen. This education was for me a culture as well as a religion. God was the Creator, and the Jews were the only people to accept His law—the Torah. Thus we acquired the divine guidance for the good life: a life of justice, truth, and loving kindness. God's purpose was to fashion a priestly and holy nation to serve as model for the rest of humanity.

Not only the laws and the precepts, but even the stories of the Bible had as their purpose to inculcate in the child principles of morality and goodness. Like most other Jewish children, I never had any real children's stories told or read to me, either at bedtime or at any other time. Therefore when, from the age of six onward, I was introduced to the stories of the Bible, they opened to me vistas of beauty and grandeur never surpassed by fact or fiction during my later life. From the age of ten to fifteen, the study of the Prophets and of the Talmud expanded and deepened my appreciation of these stories as well as of the precepts of the Torah. (Read Heine's poem, *Jehuda Halevi,* and you will realize how much was lost to Jewish life with the disappearance of the traditonal *heder.*)

Skepticism in Adolescence and Youth

But at the age of fifteen my innocent faith gave way to the adolescent growth of scepticism and reason: the belief in the divine revelation of the Bible was gradually undermined by my coming across in later Hebrew literature elements of Biblical criticism. I was disturbed by Maimonides' exposition of the reasons for the commandments of the

* The author of this article is a retired businessman, 76 years of age, who wrote it primarily for the benefit of his grandchildren. It gives the evolution of his philosophy from Jewish orthodoxy through secularism and ethical culture to a Reconstructionist outlook. We publish it as an interesting human document, reflecting the spiritual influences to which an alert Jew of the author's age and early conditioning was subjected in his long experience and which ultimately led him to a Reconstructionist outlook.

Torah, by his ideas about the angels and about the positive and negative attributes of God himself, by the Talmudic assertion that the ordinances of the Torah would be abrogated in the time to come.

I was also aware that some of the Biblical stories were at variance with the laws of nature. The holiness of the Sabbath lost its meaning, when I found out that there was no global Sabbath: that at the very moment I was observing the prescribed rest, there were many God-fearing Jews who were not observing it, because the Sabbath had not yet arrived in their longitude — or had already passed it. The *coup de grace,* to my innocent faith, was administered by Darwin's theory of evolution. So at the age of eighteen, my supernaturalist view of life was replaced by an acceptance of the laws of nature.

The Appeal of Ethical Culture

The abandonment of dogmatic religion had no influence on my attachment to the precepts of morality and ethics, which for me expressed the development of the human heart and mind. For these precepts were acknowledged by all great religious teachers as well as by all great philosophers to represent the spiritual side of human nature. When I read in the press about the existence in America of a Society for Ethical Culture, it was like an answer to a prayer. The identification of morality with any particular religious revelation seems to be in a process of dissolution, as is witnessed by the fact that 50 per cent of Americans do not belong to any church. It is not safe to tie up human or scientific truth with supernatural causes because, when the latter are discredited, Truth inevitably suffers.

The vacuum which is thus formed in the mentality of the unaffiliated is mostly filled in with various superstitions which make them receptive to the appeals of crackpots and vicious demagogues. Hence the various fascistic ideologies that have been cropping up of late, and that tend to eventuate in dictatorship. A minority of the unaffiliated—the intellectuals—serve as a cadre for Ethical Culturists.

Revised Attitude to Religion

In later life I became reconciled to the God-idea because, as an object of evolution, this idea is a natural phenomenon. Starting as a home Spirit it grew to become the protector of the tribe, then of the nation, finally asuming the Fatherhood of mankind, revered as the symbol of perfection for Truth and Goodness.

This God-Idea is almost identical with nature in still another way — carrying for humanity the burden of its ignorance. Any phenomenon in nature we could not explain we transferred to the action or influence of spirits and gods. And the mystery of the universe—the marvellous growth of science notwithstanding—will always remain a mystery. And as Nature and God divide between them the two principles, Right and Might, Nature and God will continue to hold the attention of men. Men will necessarily look to them in seeking to escape the pitfalls of life.

In its search for security against dangers lurking on all sides, security from the elements, animals, sickness or enemies, the human race put its reliance in organized defense, in science, and in laws. In addition it has relied on friendly spirits supposedly the eternal arbiters of human destiny. But in times of stress and crisis when all human safeguards fail, the individual as well as society falls back on faith, on our inborn optimism that Life and Right may find themselves *down* but never *out.* That means we put our trust in the supernatural—in God.

But to square ourselves with God, who is Perfection, we must unbosom ourselves —whether in repentance or in prayer—

in an attitude of unreserved truth and sincerity, which is possible only in our communion with God—who is perfect.

This is true of humanity as a whole. The exceptional few, who live in accordance with Pure Reason, Truth, and Goodness, are to humanity what radium is to the rest of the elements. Fine religious feeling is probably a special endowment comparable to the arts of poetry and music which, in their higher reaches, only a select few fully experience.

Book Notes

JUSTICE FOR MY PEOPLE, by Ernst Frankenstein. Dial Press Company, 199 Pages.

THIS is a convincing and dignified presentation of the Jewish cause, intended chiefly for the non-Jewish world. Beginning with a brief survey of Jewish history from ancient times to modern, the author points to persecution as the common denominator of Jewish life in all ages, reaching an unprecedented fury in our own day. Hatred of the Jew is correctly attributed to his religion which is "the dominating and decisive feature of Jewish history." Strikingly enough the triumph of Christianity, the author notes, has witnessed not a diminution in anti-Semitism, but a shocking increase. Unable to meet the Jew on the spiritual level, organized Christianity has persistently sought to destroy him physically, which confirms the penetrating observation made by Dr. Neuman in his epoch-making "History of the Jews in Spain," that the Catholic Church found it much easier to transform synagogues into Churches, after the Jews were expelled from Spain, than to convert a single Jew!

While the basic reason for the persecution of the Jew is his religion, it is his homelessness which makes that persecution possible. Only the establishment of a Jewish State can end this tragic situation, which imposes on the Jewish people the status of "beggars" among the nations of the earth, unwanted and unwelcome. This, of course, is the thesis which Herzl presented in "The Jewish State" and which Leo Pinsker proclaimed so passionately and brilliantly in his "Auto-Emancipation."

With a clear definition of the Jewish problem, and its solution, the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine, the author proceeds to analyze the question of Jewish rights to Palestine. Is not Palestine an Arab country? Why should Jews displace Arabs? What political and legal claims can Jews present? What moral justification can they have for asking that a land inhabited by others should be made a Jewish homeland? The logical and irrefutable arguments advanced should satisfy the conscience and the heart of the most sensitive.

The restoration of the Jews would rectify an ancient wrong perpetrated in 70 C.E. by the Romans, who conquered the country and exiled its inhabitants. In this expulsion, the Jews have never acquiesced.. On the contrary, throughout the ages they have continued to assert their rights to Palestine and to hope, pray and labor for their eventual return. In Jewish history and literature, Palestine has always been Jewish—and the love of the loyal Jew for his ancestral homeland has few parallels amongst other peo-

ples who have been forcibly driven from their homes. These ancient claims of the Jew have been reinforced since World War I, by the Balfour Declaration issued by Great Britain, in consequence of which the Palestine Mandate was entrusted to her. For Britain to deal with the country in a way other than provided in the Mandate is illegal. Great Britain "has no power to dispose of Palestine since it is there for one purpose only — to facilitate the Jewish Commonwealth." Today, "nobody owns Palestine as a sovereign State in her own right."

Those who are sincerely exercised by the so-called Arab "claims" will find complete satisfaction in one of the most exhaustive studies of this subject ever made. Despite popular belief to the contrary, the author proves first that "Palestine has never had more than a thin layer of Arab population, and secondly, that the land had "only 347 years of Arab rule in the course of more than 3,000 years." A carefully prepared chronology testifies to the fact that "never after the year 1071, that is never in the last 870 years has Arab rule existed in Palestine." Most timely is the evidence that the present Palestine Arab community is relatively a stranger in the country since "of the present Arab population in Palestine, 75 per cent are either immigrants themselves, or descendants of persons who immigrated into Palestine during the last 100 years, for the most part after 1882." The elaborate and scientific analysis of the relationship of the Arab people to Palestine confirms the conviction that "their long connection with the land is a myth, which is disproved by history and statistics, by the lack of any achievement and by their complete indifference towards the fate of the country."

While knowledge of these salient facts is indispensable in order to appreciate the Jewish position, the reasons why the British have suddenly discovered the Arabs, and why the Colonial Office, and to a lesser extent, the Arabs find a champion in our own State Department, are even more significant. The truth is that the so-called Arab "problem" is being pressed not in the interests of the Arabs but with the two-fold design of sabotaging Jewish aspiration in Palestine, and of keeping the Arab masses in bondage and oppression. All the evidence points to this tragic and despairing conclusion. In an age of freedom, the despotic and oriental Arab political rulers are an anachronism. Most, if not all, are in the pay of the British, and their one ambition, is "to keep the masses in this primitive state of civilization for the sake of exploiting them and to combat everyone who might oppose it." That these primitive despots, with demonstrated pro-Axis sympathies, should be championed by the British Government and employed to defeat Jewish hopes is one of the most shocking phenomena of the century.

What magnifies the iniquity is the fact that at least six sovereign Arab states now exist — with so many millions of uncultivated and uninhabited acres as to make proper utilization by the present population impossible. How true it is that "The Pan-Arab claim to Palestine . . . attempts to add another country to the enormous territories which the Arab people already possess and are unable to develop."

The moral rights of the Jews to Palestine and to status among the nations of the earth are more decisive than any political and legal claims. For the Jewish masses in Europe, Palestine is the difference between life and death. Though even before the war their position was desperate, now "they have literally nothing to look forward to" . . . with "no country in the world except the Jewish

State prepared to receive the destitute Jewish masses." A Jewish homeland has become a moral imperative, which the nations of the earth and their leaders can deny only to their own hurt and shame.

This reasoned and comprehensive exposition of Jewish claims and rights should win friends for Zionism, and will. At this juncture, however, something infinitely more than propaganda is necessary. Public opinion both Jewish and non-Jewish, is favorably disposed to the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. To compel the British Government to carry out the promises of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, there is need to arouse public opinion to such a degree that even the British Colonial Office will be obliged to reverse its anti-Jewish policy and to deal justly with Israel. And this volume will help appreciably to satisfy that need.

THEODORE N. LEWIS

The Third Annual Reconstructionist Conference

THE annual conference of the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., was held on Saturday evening, October 13, and all day Sunday, October 14, 1945, at the Hotel McAlpin, New York City.

The subject of discussion for the opening was *Diversity-in-Unity in Jewish Life.* The session took the form of a panel discussion with Dr. Ira Eisenstein, leader of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, New York City, and Associate Chairman of the Reconstructionist Editorial Board, acting as moderator. The participants in the symposium were Dr. Samuel C. Kohs, well known social worker and director of the Bureau of War Records of the National Jewish Welfare Board, Dr. Alexander M. Dushkin, director of the Jewish Education Committee of New York, and Dr. Joseph L. Blau, instructor in philosophy at Columbia University. Dr. Kohs discussed the subject from the point of view of the Jewish Community, Dr. Dushkin from the point of view of Jewish education, and Dr. Blau from the point of view of the Jewish religion.

Diversity-in-Unity in Community Organization

In his presentation, Dr. Kohs made the point that although people view reality differently, and cannot be expected to agree in belief and opinion, they can unite on the basis of action.

There is little or no unity in Jewish community organization because Jewish immigration to America came in successive waves from different points of origin. Having had such varied experiences, Jews differed in their Jewish beliefs, opinions and customs. Few of the attempts made to unify these groups have succeeded, since none of the groups was willing to give up what it considered its unlque heritage. Nor was any serious attempt made by any one group to understand the others.

The Federations represent the first effort at unification on the basis of action. Later there came the New York Kehillah, after which the Jewish Community Councils of today are patterned. Today, however, the Community Council, which is somewhat representative of Jewish community life, has to meet the competition of the Federation, which is representative of the philanthropic agencies only. The Welfare Funds instituted the custom of joining together all philanthropy, domestic and foreign. Yet there is little or no cooperation among these agencies.

The unification of the Jewish community on the basis of action is rendered difficult by its purely voluntary character. There is also great poverty in professional leadership, due in part to the insecurity experienced by workers in the Jewish field, and to the great ignorance of Jewish life which exists among both leaders and the masses of American Jewry.

There are certain remedies which we can recommend to bring some order out of the existing chaos. A program of community education so that Jews may understand one another and learn to be sympathetic to Jewish diversities will be of great assistance. Democratization of the leadership, establishing the principles of representative democracy in our organizations, will also help to bring about

nity. Professional leadership must be trained nd the Jewish professions must be raised to position of dignity and security. Community ouncils should be strengthened, and a national ssembly of Community Councils established. Once this has been achieved, we will e well on the way toward unity with all of ur diverse elements participating.

iversity-in-Unity n Jewish Education

Dr. Dushkin traced at some length the differences which exist in the field of Jewish ducation. There are Orthodox Schools, Reform Schools, Conservative Schools, Socialist chools, Yiddishist Schools, Zionist Schools, ommunist Schools. And, within each type of chool, there is even more differentiation. Jewh educators consider this differentiation ealthy.

To bring about some unity in the field of ducation, therefore, it is necessary to allow ese differences to continue but, at the same me, to recognize those elements which are ommon to all and which can be used as the asis for a unified program. Jewish educators nd that seven values are recognized in all ducational programs though with varying mphases:

1. The teaching of Torah in its widest sense, the classic continuing Jewish tradition.
2. The teaching of concrete forms of Jewish living such as the *mitzvot*.
3. The teaching of the Hebrew language, Hebrew and Yiddish literature and Jewish life.
4. The emphasizing of the sense of identification with the Jewish people.
5. The story of the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine, the unique history and background of the country and a study of present day development.
6. An examination and analysis of the American Jewish community, its environment, its functions, organizational structure, its relation to the non-Jewish community; the meaning of democracy as viewed from the vantage point of Jewish values; the relationship of Jewish culture to American life, the Jew's responsibility to America and the rights which citizenship bestows upon him.
7. The instilling of faith in divine purpose and the need to strive for a better democratic world order. Children must be taught purpose in living.

Diversity-in-Unity in Jewish Religion

In discussing diversity in Jewish religion, Dr. Blau called attention to the fact that the unity of the Jewish religion has been destroyed by the conditions under which Jews live today. Yet to despair of discovering a unifying concept is the same as assuming that there can be no religion in any democratic community. It is exactly as though one would argue that religion, being authoritarian because it is based on revelation, comes into conflict with the independence of thought which is part of the concept of freedom that is the heritage of democratic man.

To say that democratic man, to preserve his freedom, must deny religion is indeed a counsel of despair. Dr. Blau, however, refused to take this view. A positive unity in the Jewish religion can be achieved without sacrificing any essentials of Judaism or democracy, if we reconstruct Jewish religion and recognize that the doctrine of authoritarian revelation is a device for concealing and not preventing change. For the Jewish religion, like all religions, and indeed like all life, has changed and is constantly changing. Torah is the beginning of the Jewish religion, not the end. Often this change is not visible, it simply grows with the life around it, but sometimes it is accelerated and becomes visible. It is then that the counter-revolutionary trend sets in. In America, the new conditions brought about revolutionary change and, because that change was rapid, Neo-Orthodoxy, the counter-revolution, set in.

If we consider Judaism as changing rather than static, we have found the key to the unity of the diverse elements in Judaism. We must not lose our faith that there is a Jewish religion because of diversities in its interpretation; we should seek rather to define Judaism as a way of life comprehending these diversities.

Judaism is a way of life, a civilization, and the Jewish religion is but one of the elements in that civilization. It is the peculiar function of religion to be the central art for the preservation of the continuity of the civilization. It is the special function of religion to sanctify, to make sacred that which is important to group life. Thus the principle of diversity is incorporated into our view of Jewish religious life, for each group within the complex of Judaism must be granted the right to sanctify whatever it conceives as basic to its life. If we recognize revelation as the material for constant reinterpretation, religion as an organic process within a civilization, and the different understandings of it as a matter of individual ability and experience, we firmly root all the varieties of Jewish religious belief in an embracing religious unity.

Annual Report on Reconstructionist Foundation

On Sunday morning, the annual meeting of the Foundation took place. Mr. Maurice Linder, President of the Foundation, in reporting its activities from the period, March 1st, 1945 to October 1st, 1945, stressed the growing influence which the Foundation was exercising not only in American Jewish life but abroad as well. Membership was growing, fund-raising efforts were successful, and the affairs of the Foundation were in a healthy condition.

Mr. Linder cited figures to show how greatly the circulation of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST had grown. The pamphlet literature was being widely used, the books circulated and used as valuable study material. Under preparation now are the Sabbath S'eudah book designed to beautify the celebration of Sabbath Eve in the home, another book setting forth the religious significance of democracy and formulating liturgies for the observance of American national holidays, and a new series of pamphlets.

The Sabbath Prayer Book is selling very well and seems to have been helped rather than hindered by the public burning which took place in June. Referring to the *herem* placed upon Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, Mr. Linder called attention to the fact that hundreds of letters and statements had been received all expressing faith in Dr. Kaplan and revulsion against the action of the rabbis. The Foundation did not seek the publicity which the affair entailed. In fact every means was used to prevent the general press from carrying on the controversy in public. However, for the members of the Foundation and the readers of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, a pamphlet entitled *A Challenge to Religious Freedom* was issued.

The report dealt in considerable detail with the Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship, the instrumentality through which the Reconstructionist movement is translated into a way of living. There are four chapters of the Fellowship, 41 active study groups working toward chapter membership, while numerous contacts have been made in various cities for the purpose of organizing Fellowship chapters.

Mr. Linder, in commenting on the dinner held in honor of the Tenth Anniversary of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST in May, attributed its success to the dinner committee headed by Mr. Harry H. Liebovitz.

A part of the report was devoted to the service given to men and women in the armed forces. Reconstructionist literature was sent to every theatre of war, free of charge. Every effort was made to meet the spiritual needs of our servicemen with devotional literature. A brochure entitled *What the Servicemen Say,* published by the Foundation, records the reactions of the fighting men and women to the service given them.

In conclusion, Mr. Linder pointed out that the scope of the work is dependent upon the financial resources and the services of those who feel that Reconstructionism presents for American Jewry a creative program for Jewish living. "We believe," said Mr. Linder, "that our function is great and that our task has only begun. To the accomplishment of our objectives we rededicate ourselves."

Report on Publications and Education

A stirring report was given by Mr. Leopold J. Sneider, chairman of the Committee on Publications and Education, and Secretary of the Foundation. He grouped the educational materials under the categories of pamphlets, books, musical publications, syllabi and study aids, and THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST magazine.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, as an editorial enterprise, is an anomaly. No honoraria are paid to contributors; the editorial board, composed of leading figures in Jewish life, serves without compensation; yet the content and style of the periodical place it among the best in Anglo-Jewish publications. It has increased its circulation, is mailed all over the world, is found in libraries, U.S.O. houses, Jewish Centers, and in almost any institution connected with Jewish life. Its articles are often reprinted and quoted. There can be no doubt that it has a great influence on American Jewish life.

Study aids for each issue of the magazine are given gratis upon request to individuals and study groups. They are constantly and widely used, and the demand for them increases. A syllabus on the *Philosophy and Program of Reconstructionism* has been prepared for the use of those who are interested in making Reconstructionism the subject of serious study. At the present time, syllabi of Mordecai M. Kaplan's book, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion,* and of Milton Steinberg's book, *A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem,* are under preparation.

The cantatas, *What Is Torah?* and *Our Bialik,* both for unison chorus and piano, written by Judith K. and Ira Eisenstein, are unique contributions to the field of Jewish music. The success of both reflects the response which can be expected from works that enrich Jewish creativity, *What Is Torah?* has been performed in hundreds of cities, and *Our Bialik,* published only this spring, is rapidly assuming a place of importance in the Jewish music world.

The distribution and use of the pamphlets published by the Foundation is truly amazing. Since 1943 over 102,000 pamphlets have been sent gratis upon request to all who asked for them.

In the armed services particularly the response has been warm. This year alone 38,000 went to these men and women and the request for pamphlets grows more insistent. So strong has been the demand that the Foundation has now undertaken to publish six new pamphlets to meet the needs of the American Jewish Community. These pamphlets will deal with subjects suggested by chaplains, soldiers and civilians who have become familiar with Reconstructionist material.

The books published by the Foundation also have a large sale. The Prayer Book alone has sold over two-thirds of its original printing and we have been informed by publishers that, for a book of devotions, the sale is phenomenal. *Creative Judaism* and *What We Mean by Religion,* both by Ira Eisenstein, are still much in demand, particularly for use by study groups. Of our devotional literature,, in addition to the Prayer Book, the Foundation has published the New Haggadah and the Shir Hadash. The Haggadah is an especial favorite with chaplains who insist that it evokes a mood among the men of their command which is as rare as it is rewarding. The Shir Hadash, a book of supplementary prayers for the High Holydays, is used by many congregations and gives an added significance to the Holyday season.

It is almost impossible to evaluate fully the extent and measure of Reconstructionist influence on American Jewish life. Even in foreign lands, we have become known as an American Jewish movement which can be adapted to the needs of other countries. Accordingly, Dr. Kaplan's book, *Judaism as a Civilization,* has been translated into Spanish, and arrangements have been made for a good part of Reconstructionist literature to be translated into French.

We are aware, said Mr. Sneider, that many opportunities exist for adult Jewish education in America. We need more pamphlet literature, we need more books. For the future we are setting before ourselves the task of providing this necessary material for our fellow Jews.

We plan to direct our attention to Jewish student bodies in universities and colleges, to follow up the returning Jewish soldier, to work with chaplains so that the new-found interest in Jewish life evinced by the men and women to whom they ministered shall not be dissipated. We hope to reach the large body of unaffiliated Jews and return them to the orbit of Jewish life. We hope to augment our staff of speakers and lecturers, to establish training courses for leaders. What we hope most to do is to equip American Jews with religious concepts, moral principles, intellectual and ethical guides which will enable them to live responsibly as Jews and Americans.

Problems of the Reconstructionist Fellowship

The Sunday afternoon session was devoted to problems and projects of the Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship. Mrs. Albert P. Schoolman presided, and introduced Rabbi Eugene Kohn, managing editor of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, who led the discussion.

The purpose of Reconstructionism, said Rabbi Kohn, is to reconstruct Jewish life, a big and appalling task. Our movement has developed a consistent rationale, but it needs to guard against the tendency to substitute talking and thinking for action. It is the Fellowship groups which, it is hoped, will prevent Reconstructionism from remaining a mere theory and make it a means of changing our way of life and that of our people.

A religious Fellowship is needed because the synagogue is rarely in a position to serve this purpose. The synagogue must admit all Jews who wish to be a part of it, and must satisfy many people who are unwilling to commit themselves to the Reconstructionist program, Therefore we need Reconstructionist Fellowship groups to follow our dual program of study and action.

While they all follow some pattern for study, our groups have not as yet succeeded in developing action programs. Many problems confront the groups in this endeavor, such as (1) the relation of the Fellowship group to the synagogue, (2) the problem of program, (3) the problem of leadership, (4) the problem of educational material, (5) the problem of providing the means to produce educational material.

On the problem of the relation of the Fellowship group to the congregation, we must reckon with the fact that Reconstructionists generally represent a minority. Often there is violent opposition to Reconstructionism within the congregation. It is no solution of the problem to separate the over-all from the fractional program of Reconstructionism and to limit the activities of the group to the former, for the two aspects of the program are linked together. The only reasonable solution for this problem is to recommend to the Fellowship group affiliated with a synagogue that it permit itself to be bound in any public action by the policy of the congregation. This does not mean, however, that it gives up its right to plan the Jewish life of its members, nor should it renounce the right to try to influence the majority of the congregation to accept the Reconstructionist point of view.

Action projects should not be chosen at random. A definite area of action should be selected for the season's activities from among such areas as the home, the school, the synagogue, Jewish communal affairs, civic affairs.

After the particular field of activty has been chosen, the following steps should be pursued:

1. The group should seek the knowledge necessary for an understanding of the problem.
2. It should plan the steps necessary for its solution.
3. The plan should be carried out.
4. The results should be evaluated.

We must develop leaders for our groups, but, in the meantime, there are sympathetic persons in every community who may be willing to assist in planning the program. Rabbis, teachers, librarians can be utilized. Though they may not be Reconstructionists, they can be consulted as experts in their respective fields.

Educational material must be augmented. We are already planning definite action along these lines. But we must have financial means to produce this material. Here the Fellowship groups can be of real assistance. They can increase the membership of the Foundation, obtain subscriptions for THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST, and aid in obtaining allocations to the Foundation from Welfare Funds.

These are the five problems which face us in the immediate future.

Rabbi Kohn's presentation was followed by an animated discusson participated in by members of various study groups.

The session ended with the performance of the cantata *What Is Torah* by the Kvutza Group of the East Midwood Jewish Center, Brooklyn, N. Y. This group consists of young boys and girls between the ages of 15-18. Under the splendid direction of Miss Rosalyn Fleischer, one of their leaders, the young people gave an inspired interpretation of this beautiful work.

Dr. Kaplan's Address on Different Types of Jewish Religion

The concluding session of the conference was held on Sunday evening, Mr Leopold J. Sneider presiding. Mr. Sneider introduced Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan who spoke on the subject, *Different Types of Jewish Religion.**

"The function of Reconstructionism is to normalize and legitimatize diversity in unity," said Dr. Kaplan. "Hitherto, Jewish religion has served as a means of uniting all Jews. Today religion is the most divisive factor. How can we prevent Jewish religion from disintegrating Jewish life while we at the same time emphasize the indispensability of Jewish religion? We believe that to view Judaism as a dynamic religious civilization gives the answer to this question."

Within Jewish religion, there have developed five common types: there was first the Traditional type originating 2,000 years ago, the Medieval, 1,200 years ago, the Mystic, simultaneous with the Medieval, the Reformist 100-150 years ago, and the Reconstructionist.

The traditonal approach is based upon the authority of the Talmud. Its conception of what made Jewish life worthwhile, involves belief in the return to Palestine under a messiah of Davidic descent, the restoration of the sacrificial system, the resurrection of the dead and judgment for their deeds on earth. The rationale behind this conception is unquestioning acceptance of the facts as recorded in the Bible. The method of achieving salvation or self-realzation is through observance of all the *mitzvot* and the study of Torah.

Maimonides best represents the medieval type of religion. The protagonists of this type of Jewish religion were greatly influenced by the Greek philosophers and maintained that only in the contemplative life can humanity achieve its goal. The traditional conception of the world to come was reinterpreted to mean the immortality of the soul. They retained the traditional conception of the Messiah but interpreted the significance of his reign as making it possible for the philosophers to engage in studies which lead to the metaphysical knowledge of God. Only those who reach this metaphysical knowledge of God are immortal. They believed with the Greek philosophers in the absolute and infinite power of God and His eternal existence, but they rejected the Greek belief that matter is coeternal with God. This rejection was compulsory in order to justify the traditional belief in the miracles of the Bible. Modern Orthodoxy combines the Traditional and the Medieval types.

The Reformist approach transferred the idea of the worth-while life from the hereafter to the here and now. According to Reform doctrine, Israel no longer holds the center of the stage of history. Mankind as a whole should strive for goodness and righteousness, and try to achieve the Kingdom of God on Earth. The original Reform position demanded that Jews renounce their nationhood and cease to regard Palestine as indispensable to their religious life. Jews should function as a religious community throughout the world.

The Reformists derive their rationale from the modern philosophical approach to reality. They abandon the belief in the infallibility of the Torah, the personal Messiah, resurrection, the sacrifices. They retain the idea of the Chosen People but have evolved the theory of the mission. As a religious community, the Jews must activate the belief that their role in history has been to witness the truth of the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. Jews are able to play this unique role in history because of their racial gift or genius for religion. The worthwhile life can be achieved by loyalty to highly ethical and spiritual ideals

*We hope to publish Dr. Kaplan's address in a subsequent issue of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST.

no matter how great the cost. Modern Conservatism combines elements of the Medieval and the Reform types of Jewish religion.

Reconstructionism, in common with Reform, conceives of life's value in terms of the good life on earth instead of in the hereafter. However, it recognizes more clearly the relation between the political, social and economic conditions of society on the one hand, and the ethical and spiritual conditions on the other. It thus stresses the importance of political, social and economic action as a means for the attainment of the worthwhile life, whether collective or individual, and teaches that Jews should share in such action as part of their religion.

The Kingdom of God is conceived as the universal synthesis of maximal social cooperation with maximal individual freedom and growth. Parallel with the attainment of this goal for mankind, is its achievement for Israel. For Israel, the achievement of the worthwhile life is impossible without the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

Reconstructionism holds that religion is organically related to the civilization of which it is the most important expression. It holds that the viability of the Jewish religion has been due, for the most part, to the fact that Jewish civilization has been able to assimilate from non-Jewish civilizations those beliefs and ideals which were the product of their groping endeavors for life abundant. Furthermore, Reconstructionism, in its belief in group equality, rejects the doctrine of divine election of Israel, which, no matter how interpreted, implies the spiritual superiority of the Jewish people.

To make Jewish life worthwhile, strong provision must be made for the continuing vitality of the Jewish civilization, with recognition of the right to differ and of the right of divergent types of Jewish religion to co-exist. Religion must be rooted in Jewish tradition as far as possible, and should be creative of new forms and observances. Reconstructionism recognizes pluralism in religion, that God reveals himself to every human being in accordance with the natural endowment of each individual and that each individual sees God in terms of his own ideas and aspirations.

Comments by Dr. Liebman and Rabbi Kripke

Dr. Joshua Loth Liebman of Boston, Mass., was then introduced to comment upon Dr. Kaplan's address. Dr. Liebman emphasized the fact that the yearnings of men of our time for God are not satisfied by secularism, or the wonders of modern science. For one who quests, Reconstructionism offers a pathway out of the jungle. Much of Reconstructionism stems from Reform. But Reconstructionism challenges Reform on the centrality of the Jewish people and the place of the Homeland, Palestine, in Judaism. Reform Judaism has been right in its theology but wrong in its psychology. It has underestimated the emotional drive, it has not emphasized ritual sufficiently, has not tried to develop group discipline.

A new school of thought has sprung into life today called existentialism. It holds that life is meaningless and emphasizes death. It is a cult of irrationality, of pessimism. Reconstructionism sees the challenge of this movement and relates God to life, not death. Reconstructionism is the balance, the sanity in a neurotic age. This philosophy of despair and retreat, this failure of nerve, will be called spirituality; its flight from reality will be called mysticism. Reconstructionism can build a highway to the future for Jews and for the world, for its values are universal values.

Rabbi Myer Kripke of New London, Conn., was then introduced to comment upon Dr. Kaplan's address.

Rabbi Kripke stressed the fact that the development of the different types of Jewish religion occurred not because they were planned, but because the need for change was apparent. The development was so normal and natural that in this very process can be seen the manifestation of religion in life. Religion is a manifestation of life about us and an attempt to interpret that life in a form which men most urgently need. Both Reform and Reconstructionism have set out consciously to plan necessary changes in order to meet the needs of the times. It is this *conscious* planning which provokes the antagonism of the traditionalists.

Reconstructionism bridges the gulf between the traditionalist and the modern skeptic. It affirms both the right to question and the right to hold on to whatever traditional views one may find necessary for his self-realization. It is this kind of dynamic approach which will win those who are not ready to abandon Judaism but who are not satisfied with Jewish life as it exists.

One question remains: Will the kind of self-realization offered by Reconstructionism give the same measure of spiritual security and spiritual warmth as our fathers found in traditional Judaism?

I believe that Reconstructionism can give this warmth by enabling Judaism to give purpose and meaning to the life of the modern Jew. In teaching that there is no longer only one way to serve God, Reconstructionism can achieve unity-in-diversity in Jewish religion and can evolve a method of achieving the good life which shall have for its adherents the timeless appeal of service to God and humanity.

Correspondence

Objects to Use of Term "Salvation"

Sirs:

I address myself to a matter which disturbed me during the recent conference of the Reconstructionist Foundation. I am at a loss to explain the persistent use of the term "Salvation" by the leaders of the movement.

In historic Christianity, as in the other mystery religions, the term "Salvation" was utilized as a technique for inducing people to join, since it is not too difficult to persuade the average weak human that he is lost and needs saving. In modern liberal Christian thinking this term is outmoded. Some liberal Christians drop it altogether, denying the need for salvation, since there is nothing to be saved from, or for. Other Christian leaders, notably Unitarian ministers, prefer to retain the term, and are compelled to interpret it in some fashion acceptable to modern men.

Some psychiatrists, themselves reared in the Christian tradition, and loath to give up infantilistic habits of expression, use the term, and twist it to conform to some very genuine psychological experiences.

The Reconstructionist movement has taken a very definite stand against the use of old words and phrases and their twisting to make them palatable to current taste. Much of the criticism of the work of the Foundation stems from the approach of Reconstructionist leaders to ancient nomenclature (as for instance the dscussion of the idea of the "Chosen People" in the introduction of the Prayer Book).

Why, then, drag into its theological system this word "Salvation," so foreign to Jewish thinking, so obnoxious even to Christians, if they are modern? Shall we accept Christological nomenclature by tortuous interpretation, and at the same time reject Jewish terminology on the ground that we refuse to submit to "interpretations"?

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We deny that the term *salvation* is foreign to Judaism. Certainly the concept is not. We might refer to any number of such biblical verses as "God is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation," "You shall draw water in joy from the wells of salvation," "Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout to the Rock of our salvation." That the term has acquired for many people certain Christian connotations should not deter us from using it, since it expresses an essential concept of our religion, as of all religion. Human life can be and needs to be saved from defeat and frustration — from poverty, disease, ignorance, folly and sin—and it is in this quest for salvation that Judaism, like every other religion, has come to know God. Does Rabbi Wolk advocate that we delete the word *savior* from the passage in the Amidah which hails God as "King, helper, savior and shield," because the term *savior* is applied by Christians almost exclusively to Jesus?

If we want to understand what differentiates Jewish religion from all others, we must first understand what all religions have in common. This necessitates the use of a common religious vocabulary. The term *salvation* best describes the essential purpose of religion, which is to *save* human life from futility. Once we understand that, we can inquire into how religions differ in their conception of what constitutes salvation, or the worthwhile life, in their conception of the Power that makes for salvation, and in the method by which they hope to attain it. Only by the use of a common nomenclature can different religions understand one another. Only so can religion become a unifying rather than a divisive force in human life. Reconstructionism holds that religions differ from one another in belonging to different civilizations, but that, being similar in purpose, it is possible for each to benefit by an interchange of ideas. There is need, however, to create the terminology for a common universe of discourse. Is there any better term than *salvation* to express the common interest of all religions in making life worthwhile for their adherents?

EDITORS

REALITIES AND VALUES

(*Continued from Page* 8)

guage or religion." . . . Thus the Conference recognizes the principle of the Bill of Rights and makes its implementation through education a major objective of the Organization. The Conference further proposes that any nation that teaches doctrines in violation of this clause may be expelled. The United Nations Organization is trying to build unity, a unified organization for the peace and security of the world. The proposal of the American Jewish Conference would bring the educational program of the UNO into line with its avowed political objective.